

like the proposal at first. It does not, of course, sound very tempting."

"You are very kind, Aunt Judith. I'm afraid I must seem dreadfully ungrateful. But—mother, do you really want me to go to school?"

"My dear Jennet, I am sure it will be the best thing in the world for you," said Mrs. Fowler, her soft eyes filling with tears. "You don't know what it costs me to say so; but Katherine and I have long been wishing for this."

"I have wished for it too, sometimes," said Jennet, slowly. "But it was much better when it seemed quite unattainable."

Mrs. Belfont gave a short laugh, and her sister smiled faintly.

"But, mother, can you consent to the parting?" asked Jennet, reproachfully.

She thought that they were treating her feelings far too lightly, and her heart was sore. Only a few minutes ago she had been vaguely wishing for change; now she was beginning to realise that change, no matter in what form it may come, is very seldom unattended by pain.

"If I seem to consent readily, dear, it is only for your sake," Mrs. Fowler said, her eyes filling again. "The gain will be yours, and the loss mine."

"You are talking as if I had proposed an endless separation," remarked Mrs. Belfont, a little sarcastically. "My dear Kate, you were always rather sentimental. Do bring some common sense to bear upon the matter. Why be so absurdly serious?"

"Indeed, Jennet, I am afraid we are

both very silly, you and I," said the mother, brightening. "We are forgetting that there are such things as holidays, are we not? Now, my dear, thank Aunt Judith for her goodness, and tell her you will be quite ready to start for school in September."

"I do thank you, very much, aunt; and I shall be quite ready."

Jennet spoke the words in a tolerably calm voice; but, as soon as they were uttered, she turned and left the room and ran away to hide herself in the garden.

September came, all too soon; Jennet's preparations were also completed. Her box was ready, her heart was not.

(To be continued.)

THE HARP OF LIFE.

BY THE REV. SAMUEL K. COWAN, M.A.

OH, many-stringed is the harp of life,
And all of its many strings
Are touched and thrilled by the joy or strife
That Time, in its passing, brings.

As many as life has hopes and fears,
And loving and loveless things;
As many as life has joys and tears,
So the harp has many strings!

Who hath not felt, in the world's hard strife,
When our hopes, like dreams, depart,
The faint sad song of the harp of life
That thrills in the living heart?

Who hath not felt, when the strife is still,
And Hope, for Victory, sings,
That harp, to our heart's rejoicing, thrill
With its glad responsive strings?

Sing on! weep on! be the battle brief,
Or the battle long and sharp,
Your song is sweet, be it joy or grief,
For an angel hath tuned the harp!

Oh, heaven-tuned harp! By deed or word—
By song or touch—that we
Might never mar, by a jarring chord,
Thy heavenly harmony!

It was lent to us here—that harp of life—
That He who lent might know,
To our spirit's touch, in rest and strife,
What melodies would flow!

Thrill on, glad harp! to the joys of earth!
But think, as thy glad chords ring,
Of the grander song of immortal mirth
That shall thrill a diviner string!

Weep on, sad harp! for the God of Love
Is nigh, and in pity hears!
For thy woes shall sweeten thy joys above,
As the chords are softened by tears!

And when life's song has passed away,
And the chords no more are pressed—
Death hath not hushed the harp for aye—
It is only a bar of rest!

A bar of rest (how sweet, how dear
To those who have waited long!)
Between its broken music here
And its sweet hereafter song!

THE FRAMLEY PARSONAGE ROCKERY.

BY GORDON STABLES, M.D. R.N.

It was a lovely morning in June.

The French windows of the room where the family was seated at breakfast were wide open, yet it was so early that the grass out there on the lawn was still damp, and dewdrops hung like diamonds in the roses that grew all around the verandah.

Letitia, the youngest of the three daughters, looked somewhat pale and wan. It was the first morning she had been down to breakfast for nearly three weeks. The other two girls seemed as fresh and healthy and happy as country girls always do, who have duties to perform and do perform them. The other members of the family were the father and mother and Stephen. Stephen was an Oxford undergraduate, who had not yet made up his mind what he should be, and was apparently in no hurry to do so. He had an indulgent father,

a clergyman, neither richer nor poorer than the generality of country clergymen are, who superintended his studies in the long vacation, while the mother on the other hand devoted the most of her attention to the daughters.

No idleness was brooked at Framley Parsonage, but, nevertheless, the vicar well knew the value of healthful recreation, and knew, too, that exercise to be of any value at all as a health preservation, must be enjoyable, so he encouraged his family in all legitimate pastimes, and they were very happy in consequence.

Framley Parsonage was a rambling old place; grounds and all included it was some acres in extent, had a paddock, a pond, and a large green, to say nothing of the kitchen garden, flower garden, and lawns.

On the green (it was too small to designate by the name of meadow) tennis was played,

and it was one of the multifarious duties of Brown, the old gardener, to see that this green was kept in perfect order.

"I am quite sure of one thing," said Letitia, languidly, "I shall not play lawn tennis this summer again. I do not like the game—now."

"You were right, Let.," said Stephen, laughing, "to add the little word 'now.' You used to like the game."

"Yes," put in Muriel, the eldest, "and probably if Let. had not persisted in playing on damp grass with thin shoes on, she would be as fond of the game now as ever."

"Pass the honey, Muriel, dear," remarked Edith. "As for me, I should never tire playing lawn tennis, and if I caught cold through doing so, I should begin all the same as soon as I got well enough. I think the brave

soldier who invented the game should have a nice tombstone."

"A wooden one perhaps," said Stephen. "You dear, stupid Sissy, we don't usually build tombstones to people till they are dead."

"Well, I really didn't know, I thought the game had been invented quite a hundred years ago."

"I wonder by the way if cousin Winfield is coming over to-day," she continued.

But at that very moment—and Edith turned red when she saw him—the tall, handsome form of cousin Winfield himself appeared on the verandah. He was the curate of a neighbouring parish, and when not on duty he spent his leisure time in gardening. Gardening was his particular hobby.

"What are you girls going to be after to-day?" he said, as he seated himself easily in papa's rocking chair, for he knew he was always as welcome as flowers in May at the old parsonage.

"Pray," said Letty, "what were you doing, sir, all day yesterday, that you couldn't find time to come and ask how I—your invalid cousin—was?"

"I knew you were on the mend, Letty," said Winfield, "so I stayed at home to look after my flowers. My rockery is a thing of beauty now, Letty."

"Now, then," said the vicar, "why don't you girls have a rockery? That would be just the employment for Letty for the next few weeks; it would keep her off the grass. Old Brown could do the rough work, and Win. could superintend—be the engineer and architect, and all combined."

"The idea, I think, is quite a delightful one," said mamma.

"So I think too," remarked Stephen, "and I for one will be most happy to—"

"To do what?" asked Letty.

"To look on," said Stephen.

"Lazy boy," his eldest sister said. "But let us see Brown at once, and we can arrange preliminaries, choose a site, and lay our plans. The morning is so fine, and none of us have anything very pressing to attend to."

The two eldest girls and Winfield went to look for Brown. They found him tying lettuces up at the sunny end of the kitchen garden. He straightened himself up, and touched his eyebrow with a forefinger by way of salute.

"Brown, we are going to have a rockery, and we want you to tell us all you know about arranging it. Don't you understand?"

Brown was staring at her with his mouth open, but he replied, "In course I understands, miss."

As the young ladies waited expectantly, he felt himself bound to continue. He shuffled about a good deal, then went on—

"When t'ould squire were alive, miss, he did have one, and main good the young 'uns used to be to eat. In a pie, you know, miss, 'ough there be a kind o' bitterness about their backbones, but—"

"What are you talking about, Brown?" cried Muriel, impatiently.

"About th'ould squire's rockery, miss."

Winfield laughed outright, and the girls couldn't help smiling, though they were annoyed.

I do not think that the curate was a bit disappointed at Brown's want of knowledge, and when he found the whole matter was to be left in his hands, and that the old gardener was only to be the day labourer, he waxed quite eloquent on the subject of rockeries. I cannot tell you his exact words, because I'm only a sailor, and though I can a-sort-of sing "Tom Bowling," I'm not at all eloquent; but I can give you the pith of this young and manly parson's speech.

"In a small place like yours," he said,

"you cannot have a very extensive rockery or alpinery. To be right, you ought to have several, so that the various species of flowers could be grown in places and soil suitable to them; but suppose we have a sort of a general arrangement, a rockery that will do for all kinds of pretty flowers. This is my idea, and I think that the chief charm about a rockery of this kind is its semi-wildness and the beautiful way it shows up its flowers. It is a kind of a landscape on a small scale, a picture, a poem, a thing of beauty, and a joy for ever."

"As a rule, when girls or boys set about getting a rockery up, they just get together a large heap or pyramid of mould, and stick stones in it with flowers between, and may be a stonecrop or two, which, in time, takes possession of all the place. The flowers they plant on it do not, as a rule, thrive, because the water supplied or the rain runs off again, and the only thing eventually that the place becomes good for is to harbour slugs, toads, and newts. It is a vivarium, not a rockery. Let us be a little more ambitious and a trifle more scientific."

"Now," he continued, "here is a border close by the walk and not far from the hedge. I should guess it to be about seven or eight feet wide. It looks to me the plague-spot in your otherwise nicely tended flower garden, for, although it has a south-western exposure, it is pretty evident that Brown grows nothing here but weeds, which doubtless he permits to come to maturity and generate seedlings all over the garden. Oh! I don't say there is any harm in that, for weeding does the old man good, and keeps his back from getting stiff. But suppose, with Brown's permission, we turn his weedy into a rockery."

"But," said Edith, "our flower garden slopes downwards somewhat, at all events, towards Brown's 'weedy,' as you call it. Will that not be against the principles of scientific rockery building?"

"I don't think so in the least, because you can have any amount of elevation you think fit in your rockery, and we can have some parts lower even than the surface; the water must not come down the walks and flood these parts, and the soil is porous, so we can have in our rockery both damp ground and dry sunny heights. The hedge behind will afford a protection against cold winds, but we must not let it enroach."

"What shape are you going to make the rockery?" said Letty, who, muffled up in a Shetland shawl, had just joined the group.

"Oh, Letty!" cried Winfield, "you startled me. I took you for a beautiful ghost. But I'm glad you've come. Did you ever play at blots?"

"Yes," said Letty. "You dash a drop of ink on a sheet of paper and smudge it with a soft paper pad."

"Or your finger."

"Or your finger," said Letty, smiling, "but it isn't nice for the finger; and if you then look into the blot you can trace a face or a figure or a bit of landscape, which it only wants a touch or two of a pen to complete and make a picture of. But what has that to do with the formation of a rockery?"

"A deal," said Winfield. "Listen, Brown is going to be told that 'rubbish may be shot here,' nay, more, he must furnish the rubbish, and that will be a mixture of old mould, brickdust, mortar, anything to make a heap, but one that must not be too open. Well then, Brown having done this, the place to a great extent will shape itself suggestively into a landscape, in the same way that blots do."

"Only with the assistance," said Cousin Edith, "of your gigantic intellect."

"My gigantic spade, you mean," said manly Winfield. He stood over six feet high in his slippers, did this particular cousin.

"The greater part of the rockery," he went on, "will be an irregular bank from one to two and a-half feet high, with a glen or two in it—the depressions I spoke about; the most part of this bank will be covered with two or three inches of mould or loam, and in this mould stones will be placed."

"Neatly arranged?" asked Letty.

"No, certainly not. We do not want the rockery to look like a burial ground. We must study irregularity. And mind these stones will not be stuck there merely for show, they will serve a useful purpose. Sandstone and flints are the best; they give protection, afford roorage, and retain moisture enough for the growth of the little plants and flowers."

"You will have ferns also," Letty said.

"Won't you?"

"I'm pleased to see you taking such an interest in it, Letty," replied Winfield. "We will find room for a few, but they must not be very large nor spreading ones, and they must not stand between tiny plants and the sun. They must keep well back, or be at one end. But the first consideration is to get the rockery itself ready."

"If a cartload or two of peat earth will help, ye, sir," said Brown, who had been standing a little way apart, "I think I knows where to find 'em."

"Bravo! Brown," cried Winfield, giving him a pat on the shoulder; "a little peat earth would be a material advantage."

"Now then, girls," Winfield went on, "there is just one other thing will be wanted, and that is a bed or two of ground in some out-of-the-way quiet corner of the garden to place some of your flowers away in when done blooming, and in order to make room for others. For I want you to have all kinds of pretty little things on this rockery, so that it shall be all ablaze with beauty from January to December."

"We can have geraniums in summer, can't we?" said the invalid. "Only," she added, "they are not Alpine flowers."

"Aren't they, indeed?" replied Cousin Winfield. "If we take the word 'Alpine' in its broad sense, then geraniums are as much Alpine flowers as heaths are. You ought to see the hills around the Cape, Letty."

"Are they very beautiful?"

"In the season, yes. They are more than beautiful, they are gorgeous in the extreme."

For once in his lifetime, old Brown, the vicar's gardener and man-of-all-work, felt himself interested, and, under the able superintendence of Cousin Winfield, set himself to work in earnest to convert his weedy into a beautiful rockery. The barrow, the spade, and the rake were the principal tools used, with the exception of the tools that gardeners Adam and Eve found so handy—namely, fingers. In a few days the rockery was laid out, although not planted. But flowers came next, and it was soon all a mass of varied colour and loveliness. Winfield brought flowers from his own garden and his rockeries to aid in decking it.

"Oh!" I think I hear someone say, "you cannot transplant flowers in bloom."

This is a very generally received belief, I know. But experience tells me it is a mistake. Flowers in bloom, I admit, cannot be taken long distances without dying; but I constantly shift them, while covered with blossoms, from one place to another. I even raise blooming annuals, and put them in the window boxes or wherever else I wish to make a show, and no evil results happen. The secret is to take up the whole root and all the earth around it, and to carry it at once to its new place of abode, which must have been previously excavated to receive it. After it is planted well down, a little water will make assurance doubly sure. A capital stimulant, I may tell my readers, to window plants that do not seem thriving, is water well reddened with the permanganate

of potash. Remember this water stains the hands brown. *Verbum sap.*

The rockery at Framley Parsonage turned out quite as well as Cousin Winfield expected it would, for the simple reason that it was carefully got up to begin with, and carefully tended afterwards; never allowed to want for just the amount of water it needed, and never allowed to get bare of mould in any part, while, on the other hand, the weeds were kept down.

I will now conclude by merely naming a few of the flowers that grew, and may even now be growing on this charming little rockery; then if any of my readers chose to construct a similar place, bigger or smaller, I have no doubt that their experience will suggest scores of other suitable plants for it. Well, then, in spring there were crocuses, snowdrops, primroses, dwarf wallflowers of several shades, hyacinths

of every colour and tint, dwarf tulips, the pale blue scillas, a sweetly pretty wee flower; campanulas, ranunculuses, and glorious anemones or wind flowers. Let me think what else there was in spring; I am writing from memory. Oh, different kinds of primulas and Alpine auriculas, and bits of pyrethrum (golden) to throw light into the place, and lobelias, and many other things I cannot remember. But what a show even the few flowers I have named will make in spring! But during summer or autumn there also flourished on the Framley Parsonage rockery the sweet dianthas, the golden-orange marigold, carnation and picotees and dwarf asters, as well as Letty's geraniums. These latter were not put down in a close bed, but here and there to mingle with and show up the colours of other flowers. There were near the

edges also, and drooping over the bigger stones, patches of tropeolum rich in its wealth of crimson; nor were violas and pansies and delphiniums forgotten, nor ivy-leaved pelargoniums.

I've not done yet, but very nearly. There were blue penstemons and lovely gentians, and many charming phloxes. In addition to all these, there were special ferns and grasses of many kinds, and all sorts of bog plants, and not a few heaths, and I may just mention that whenever Letty in her walks found any little morsel of a sturdy wild flower, she took it up with its roots and mould and conveyed it to the rockery, and there it bloomed and grew.

You see, then, that a rockery really is a delightful acquisition; in a manner of speaking, it is really a joy for ever, because you can be always adding to its beauty.



THE LOST FLEECES.

By DARLEY DALE, Author of "Spoilt Guy," "Cissy's Troubles," &c.

CHAPTER IV.

THE factory boys and men began work at half-past six, while the women and girls were not required till seven—an early hour enough in the dark winter mornings, but still the women were glad and thankful of this half-hour's grace. Knowing that Patrick Kelly would be at the factory when she started, Alice called to inquire for Susie on her way to her work, and found her very weak, though the bleeding had not returned. Feeling very sad at the thought of Susie's weak state, and knowing there could be no recovery, or at best, only a temporary one, Alice went on her way down the hillside in the grey dawn. She was troubled about the fleeces as well as about Susie, and, though she knew Patrick cared nothing for his sister, she could not bear having to get him into trouble while Susie lay dying; on the other hand, her duty

"HERE IS A PIECE, SIR," SAID ALICE."